

Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

Daniel Boone Visitors' and Exposition Center

Announcement of Feasibility Study Findings

August 16, 2005

Duffield, Virginia

I am pleased to return to Scott County this evening to provide further details on the planning and development of the Daniel Boone Visitors' and Exposition Center which will be located here in Scott County. This project represents one of the most significant economic and tourism development initiatives in the County's history, and the details for the new center are rapidly taking shape.

One week ago, many of us gathered to celebrate the announcement of a major award of federal funding for the Daniel Boone Center project. At my request, the Congress has appropriated \$2.56 million for the development of the facility. The funding was included as part of the highway legislation which was approved in late July and will finance much of the preliminary work needed to enable construction of the center, including the detailed engineering and design work and several other activities.

Using a \$50,000 federal grant which I announced in 2004, a comprehensive feasibility study for the new Visitors' and Expo Center has now been completed. The study was conducted to determine the specific components of the project in order to maximize the benefits to the tourism and agricultural economies of Scott County. The study also determined the appropriate site for the construction of the Visitors' and Expo Center. Tonight several individuals will be providing the specific findings of the feasibility study, and we will also discuss the detailed long term vision which is now emerging for the accomplishment of our goals for the Daniel Boone Visitors' and Expo Center.

At this time, I would like to share some of the exciting and innovative plans which have already come to light for the combined Visitors' and Expo Center. When completed, the Visitors' Center portion will house an exhibit area meeting Smithsonian Institution standards for museum collections. It will feature Daniel Boone and Revolutionary era archives pertaining to the region, a library for genealogical research and a theater. The Visitors' Center will be a major addition to the network of attractions currently located along the Daniel Boone Heritage Trail and will serve to draw greater numbers of visitors to our region with consequent benefits for the tourism economy of Scott County.

The Exposition Center portion of the facility will enhance the agricultural economy of our region. It will offer appropriate indoor and outdoor venues to host sheep and cattle shows , horse training and riding events, car and tractor shows, circus events, expositions of various kinds, school graduation ceremonies, and large group meetings and conferences for which no sufficient facility currently exists in Scott County or the surrounding region in Virginia.

In addition to featuring information, exhibits and activities related to the Daniel Boone era, as well as special regional events, the combined center will provide educational offerings related to Scott County's agricultural heritage and present day economy. Capitalizing on partnerships with the educational institutions in the region, the new center will have the capability of offering instructional programs and activities in new and innovative agricultural techniques, as well as large scale facilities for the sale of agricultural products both on-site and electronically.

Before we begin our discussion of the feasibility study and the new developments for the Daniel Boone facility, I would like to thank several key individuals who have been instrumental in the creation of our vision for the facility.

Keith Wilson, Bob McConnell and the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association have been strongly devoted to the cause of enhancing the tourism economy of our region through their effective work to add value to the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail experience. The vision, determination and competence that this group has brought to the process is impressive. We would not be here today without their innovative leadership, and I want to thank Keith and Bob for their thousands of hours of volunteer time, for their outstanding public service.

I want to thank Ron Flanary and the fine staff of the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission for the assistance they have offered to date on our comprehensive project. We are going to be counting on their expertise as the project takes shape and is constructed.

Tim Blankenbecler, Director of the Small Business Development Center at Mountain Empire Community College, and Dr. Terry Suarez, President of Mountain Empire Community College, have also provided outstanding support, and I thank them for the time and effort they have invested.

I want to express my appreciation to Sally Hamer, Area Manager with U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency for her key assistance in obtaining the federal grant funds which enabled the feasibility study.

I want to thank the members of the Daniel Boone Visitors' and Exposition Center Advisory Committee, many of whom have joined us this evening, for their interest in this project, for their insights into what it should accomplish and for the time they have devoted to defining the vision for our initiative.

Finally, I want to recognize the essential role played by the Scott County Economic Development Authority and the Board of Supervisors in this effort.

The Daniel Boone Visitors' and Expo Center project has two initial challenges, the first of which is the identification and acquisition of a suitable parcel of land along the corridor of the Daniel Boone Trail on which the Visitors' Center and the Expo facilities may be constructed. The second challenge is the provision of the 20 percent local match required for the \$2.56 million federal appropriation.

I am pleased to announce this evening that the Scott County Economic Development Authority and Board of Supervisors are stepping forward to meet both of those needs. The County is prepared to provide for the center a 44-acre parcel of land which it owns in Duffield, satisfying both the need for a suitable location and the 20 percent local match. After careful consideration by Spectrum Design and Hill Studios, the consultants who performed the feasibility study of a number of potential sites, the property was identified as the most appropriate. It lies on the South side of U.S. Route 58 across from Thomas Village. From the top of the site, there is an excellent view of Kane Gap, through which the settlers crossed on their way to Cumberland Gap. The property is located squarely along the Daniel Boone Trail corridor, and its location provides proximity to trail heads to be constructed leading to Kane Gap.

With the donation of this property by the Scott County Economic Development Authority, not only will the Visitors' and Expo Center have an appropriate setting, but also the match for the federal funding will be provided - two birds with one stone.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize EDA Director John Kilgore for his outstanding leadership and for the time and effort he has provided to this initiative and to recognize each of the members of the EDA who are with us this evening: Greg Smith, Chairman of the EDA, Robert Barker, Myron Salyer, Helen Sanders, Reg St. Clair, David Templeton and Jack Vanzant. I also want to commend the Scott County Board of Supervisors for its support of the project and recognize those who have joined us: Chairman David Redwine, Paul Fields, Joe Herron, Chad Hood, Joe Horton, Randall "Buck" Kinkead and Danny Parks. The commitment and vision of these individuals and their respective Boards make Scott County an ideal location for a project of this magnitude and will assure its long term success.

A great deal of work lies ahead to initiate the project. Critical decisions must be made concerning which pieces to this multi-phase project should move forward first, how the facilities should be managed and by whom and where additional funding should be sought and for what.

The feasibility study performed by Spectrum Design and Hill Studios will provide the basis for such decisions by the Advisory Steering Committee. I am pleased to welcome David Hill with Hill Studios and David Vandy of Spectrum Design, who will share with us tonight the findings of the study undertaken earlier this year. They will be followed by Ron Flanary, Executive Director of LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, who will provide his thoughts on other potential partners for the project.